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TAGS: PGOV PREL HA

SUBJECT: HAITI MONTHLY: DECEMBER 2008

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Donald L. Moore for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary: This is a monthly report on various political topics of interest which do not merit a full reporting cable. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) MOST POLITICAL PARTIES REGISTER FOR ELECTIONS. According to the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), twenty-seven political parties were officially registered for the planned April 19 partial Senate elections by the December 18 deadline, including Lavalas, Lespwa, OPL, Fusion, and several smaller political parties. The CEP subsequently announced an extension of the deadline to December 30. The fact that a number of political parties met the initial deadline may bode well for greater political party participation than anticipated when several parties openly criticized the CEP after the election date was announced in October.

¶3. (SBU) PARLIAMENT, GOVERNMENT AGREE ON 2009 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA. In a MINUSTAH-sponsored conference December 9-10, Parliamentary leaders and key GOH officials agreed on an ambitious legislative agenda for the first half of 2009. Many key USG priorities such as anti-corruption legislation and draft laws on political parties and local government were included, although the agenda did not address trafficking in persons. Senate President Kely Bastien (Lespwa, West) praised the workshop as an unprecedented step forward in cooperation with the executive branch; the resulting agreement was a bright spot in an otherwise tempestuous month for relations between the Parliament and Prime Minister Pierre-Louis's government.

¶4. (SBU) INTERPELLATION OF FINANCE MINISTER ANNOUNCED, AGAIN. Senator Anacasis Jean-Hector (Lespwa, West) announced December 16 that he and several colleagues will proceed with a plan to interpellate Finance Minister Daniel Dorsainvil on January 14. The same Senators had announced a plan to summon Dorsainvil in December but postponed that move after a meeting between the Prime Minister and parliamentary leaders December 2. A number of politicians have criticized the Finance Minister for being too slow to disburse emergency funds in the wake of the August-September hurricanes. Dorsainvil is likely to survive any vote of confidence, but his interpellation signals increased frustration in Parliament with perceived missteps in the government's disaster relief efforts.

¶ 15. (C) CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS FOLLOW DRUG MONEY SEIZURE IN PORT-DE-PAIX. Allegations of police and judicial corruption are swirling following a mid-November police raid on the home of suspected drug dealer Alain Desir (now in U.S. custody) near the northern city of Port-de-Paix that resulted in the seizure of USD 1.7 million in cash. There are strong indications that the amount of cash found in the home was far higher than the USD 1.7 million the Port-de-Paix police turned in to Port au Prince, and that local police and prosecutors divided a large amount of cash among themselves. The Minister of Justice told the press December 29 that all police involved in the initial raid have been suspended pending an investigation, and that the Ministry has also suspended the senior judge in the Port-de-Paix district for insubordination after the judge declared a work stoppage to protest the alleged pilfering of seized funds by police and prosecutors involved in the case. Senator Evaliere Beauplan (Northwest, Pont) vehemently denied a report that Port-de-Paix officials involved in the seizure set aside USD 20,000 for him. The Haitian Parliament has announced a bicameral inquiry into the affair.

¶ 16. (SBU) TRANSIT DISPUTE INFAMES TENSIONS WITH DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. Haitian press reports that bus service to the Dominican Republic has been interrupted after protestors, reportedly from a Dominican drivers union, repeatedly impeded Haitian-owned busses from crossing back into Haiti. Despite the announcement of an agreement to permit cross-border traffic December 23, the director of Haiti's Capital Coach Lines told the press the next day that his companies would not resume service until the GODR could guarantee the safety

PORT AU PR 00001772 002 OF 002

of his drivers and passengers. Two GOH ministers have reportedly interceded with their Dominican counterparts to resolve the situation. Coming on the heels of acts violence against Haitians living in the DR, this incident has further burdened relations between the two countries.

¶ 17. (SBU) CONFUSION PERSISTS OVER STATUS OF BOULOS'S SENATE SEAT. A lawyer for Rudolph Boulos (Fusion, Northwest) announced in late December that he will challenge in court any attempt to hold an election to fill Boulos's seat in the Haitian Senate. (Note: A month-long Senate inquiry concluded in March 2008 that Boulos, who was born in New York, is a U.S. citizen and therefore never legitimately held the title of Senator, since the Haitian constitution prohibits dual-nationality. He announced his resignation March 18, but retracted it the next day. End note.) The Senate passed a resolution November 27 referring the matter to the courts; Provisional Electoral Council officials told the Embassy in mid-December that there is no final decision as to whether Boulos's seat will be filled in the upcoming elections.

MOORE